

PARTNERING WITH PARENTS

Scope: Students will explore some of the dynamics involved when working with parents. First, what are the standard practices that all squadrons should use when partnering with parents of new cadets? Second, how might leaders of cadets build goodwill among parents by involving them in the life of the squadron? Third, what are some effective methods that can help leaders address parents’ concerns?

Format: Informal Lecture and Guided Discussion

Duration: 30 minutes

Objectives:

1. Identify standard practices squadrons should use to partner with parents.
2. Discuss innovative ways to foster communication and involve parents in CAP.
3. Describe methods for addressing parents’ concerns.

Resources: *Parent’s Guide to the Civil Air Patrol Cadet Program*; PowerPoint slides.



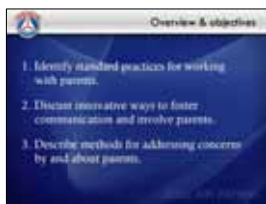
STARTING POINT

[Introduce yourself and state the seminar’s topic.]



INTRODUCTION

Cornell University researchers report that kids with highly-involved parents are more active in extracurricular activities than kids whose parents are less involved. Keep the parents informed and engaged in the life of the squadron, and the cadets will participate actively. Every experienced leader of cadets knows this. But how do you go about engaging parents?



OVERVIEW

This seminar will begin by identifying some standard practices that all squadrons should use when partnering with parents. The majority of the seminar will be devoted to exchanging good ideas for keeping communication lines open with parents and involving them in unit activities. Finally, we will conclude by discussing ways to address concerns from parents, and concerns about senior members who have kids in the squadron.



MAIN POINT #1: STANDARD PRACTICES

[Informal Lecture]

Parents expect local CAP leaders to develop a partnership with them. There are four standard practices that CAP would like each squadron to follow in partnering with parents. I will outline each one briefly, and then we can discuss them in depth during our discussion later in the seminar.

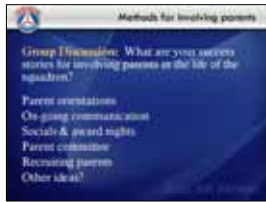
A. Welcome & Orientation. Before a prospective cadet joins CAP, a senior member should give their parents a brief orientation. Parents will want to know what it costs to be a cadet, what their son or daughter will gain from their cadet experience, how they are to obtain uniforms, what activities are scheduled, etc. In a moment, we will discuss methods for conducting parent orientations, but for now we simply want to recognize that every parent deserves an orientation to CAP.

B. Roster & Contact Info. Squadrons should provide parents with a squadron roster and contact info for all the adults who interact with cadets. You can begin to build a good rapport and ease parents' anxieties by making sure parents meet the senior staff and are given contact information for them.

C. Calendar of Events. Parents need to know about upcoming events. They will want to know about activities at least two weeks in advance. The calendar should also include details about costs, locations, times, points of contact, etc.

D. Parents' Guide. Shortly after a cadet joins CAP, National Headquarters will mail a *Parents' Guide* to their home. You should familiarize yourself with the guide, as it outlines what parents can expect from local CAP leaders. The guide can also be used to introduce a parent to CAP before their son or daughter joins CAP.

TRANSITION: The four items listed on the slide -- are minimum standards that all squadrons can easily meet. Now, let's take a closer look at some practical methods for partnering with parents.



MAIN POINT #2: METHODS FOR INVOLVING PARENTS

[Guided Discussion]

There are dozens of ways parents can support the squadron without actually joining CAP. What are your success stories for involving parents in the life of your squadron? [Take each topic listed on the slide one at a time.]

A. Parent Orientations. First, who has a success story to share about how you welcome and orientate new parents?

Anticipated Responses: Ask cadets to bring a parent in before they join; use the *Parents' Guide* during the orientation; have a calendar and phone roster ready; introduce the senior staff; emphasize the long-term benefits of CAP.

B. On-Going Communications. Does your dialog with parents stop with the orientation? What are some ways to keep the communication channels open?

Anticipated Responses: Squadron websites; email bulletins; newsletters; open houses; awards nights; parents committee [some points are discussed below].

C. Socials & Awards Nights. An easy way to get parents to stay in contact with parents is through socials and awards nights. What successes have you had here?

Anticipated Responses: Invite parents to pin-on their cadet's first stripe; invite parents to award ceremonies; schedule a pot luck a few times each year; have a holiday party; ask parents to plan social events and awards nights; etc.

D. Parents' Committee. Parents can do more than host social events. What are some projects that a parents' committee can do to support the squadron?

Anticipated Responses: Soliciting donations from businesses; organizing a carpool; developing partnerships with civic groups and aerospace-related businesses; networking to find a better squadron HQ; championing CAP in the media; building support among school officials; serving as a guest speaker; recruiting new members; etc.

E. Recruiting. Parents can help the squadron so much without joining, but of course, we can always use more members. Do you have any success stories in terms of recruiting parents? How do you do it?

Anticipated Responses: Encourage parents to become Cadet Sponsor Members; welcome parents who want to volunteer "part-time"; if you see a parent waiting in the parking lot, invite them inside; tell parents that there is more to CAP than cadets, and encourage their interest in ES and AE; if they are a teacher, encourage them to become AEMs to gain access to AE materials for their classroom; etc.

TRANSITION: Collectively, we have identified dozens of ways that leaders can involve parents in the life of the squadron, even if the parent does not join CAP. Next, we will focus the discussion on how we can help resolve parents' concerns.



MAIN POINT #3: ADDRESSING PARENTS' CONCERNS.

[Guided Discussion]

If we think of ourselves as partners with parents, then when a parent comes to us with a concern or complaint, we can turn a potentially negative experience into a positive one. If you were a parent of a cadet, how would you want the squadron commander to respond to your concerns? [Allow students to respond, and build a list on the board. Review the points below, if students overlook them.]

A. Listen.

- Listen patiently. Focus on what the parent is saying, not what you will say next.
- Take time to meet privately with the parent, without interruption.
- Be polite and show respect to the parent.

B. Have the kid's best interest at heart.

- Remember, the discussion is not about your cadet *but their son or daughter*.
- Explain that you see your role as being a mentor and positive role model.
- Recognize that CAP is just one facet of the young person's life, placing a distant third to family and school obligations.

C. Clearly Communicate Your Perspective & Decisions.

- Take time to explain your thought processes.
- Point to past experiences with similar issues, but recognize that every situation is unique.
- Focus on the facts, not hearsay.
- Explain how CAP policies guide and inform your decision-making, but do not hide behind the regulation.
- Identify when the matter will be reviewed again (ie: as in the case of deciding not to promote a cadet).
- Emphasize the positive, and how the cadet can learn from the experience.

D. Offer to have the DCP mediate.

- In sticky situations, ask the DCP for help.
- Let parents know that they can ask the wing to help resolve their concern. This shows fairness.
- Explain that CAP feels so strongly about responding to grievances that we have an impartial IG program in place to investigate serious concerns that can not be resolved locally.

TRANSITION: The Golden Rule should guide our relations with parents, especially when they come to us with concerns. A good commander can take a potentially negative situation and turn it in to a positive one. Now let's summarize what we discussed during this seminar.



SUMMARY

[Review the main points shown on the slide.]



REMOTIVATION & CLOSING

Parents are not obstacles. As reported by Cornell University, we know that cadets will be more apt to stay active if CAP partners with their parents. We must support moms and dads as we mentor and develop their sons and daughters.